



Rebecca (Bex) Chapman

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Previous experience on General Synod

I was thrilled to be **elected to General Synod at the end of 2019**. I've fully taken part in every General Synod meeting since – two sessions in person and five meetings online as we faced the challenge of the pandemic.

I've been diligent, thorough and have **spoken during multiple Synod debates** – highlighting the needs of children and young people (and our desire to hear their voices), supporting Tim Goode's amendment to raise awareness of those with disabilities, and asking Synod to remove term limits for Deanery Synod reps – because sometimes our Deanery Synod places can be hard to fill. I want to continue this engagement by being **re-elected for a full five-year term**, and to be able to attend more in person meetings; to meet and listen to more people and have more fruitful conversations to bring about change.

About me

I came to faith as a teenager at a large Anglican church in Bristol, then studied theology at university. I came to the Diocese of Southwark in 2006 when my husband, Mark, and I joined the church family at **St Mark's, Kennington** where I have been on PCC and Deanery Synod since 2010. We have three boys of primary school age, and our middle son is autistic. We also have strong links to **St John the Divine, Kennington**, where I am on the electoral roll, with our sons at the church school and our eldest sons in the church choir (taking their first communions from Fr Mark).

I have been increasingly **involved in the life of our diocese** since 2010 when I joined Lambeth North Deanery Synod, wanting to be part of helping our parish connect better to the deanery, diocese and wider church. In 2018 I was elected to the Southwark Diocesan Synod (and re-elected this year) and was later elected to the Southwark Diocesan Council of Trustees. It's been brilliant to learn so much about our diocese (who we are, what we do well, and what we can do better) and to be able to share this with my deanery and church.

I've a **genuine passion for the national church** and for Synod itself – in ensuring we strive to maintain both our unity and our diversity, and in doing all that we can to do this well. This love has been informed and intensified by my decade at Lambeth Palace working for two Archbishops of Canterbury.

In addition to running our home, I work part time as a Director of Communications, helping charities and faith groups, including YourNeighbour, raise awareness of their work. I volunteer as a trustee at four charities including Christians in Media, so I have experience in **governance and scrutiny**. This Easter I was involved in our Deanery's Passion Trail, writing news articles and promoting it via social media as well as visiting all 14 churches on the trail with my family. I love sharing stories about our parishes, our deaneries, and our various synods; there's never a dull moment in Southwark!

What do I bring to Synod?

I attended General Synod in several professional capacities from 2008-2018, and have loved the privilege of representing Southwark as a member in 2020/2021. I understand how the national church, the diocese and our parishes can work together, **how Synod itself works** and how we can achieve change through it.

Mum with a young family working part time in communications

15 years in the Diocese of Southwark

11 years serving on Deanery Synod and PCC

Member of Diocesan Synod since 2018

Filled a casual vacancy on General Synod over 2020/2021

Worked for two Archbishops of Canterbury and I understand how Synod works

3 years working for a parish church

Theology graduate

Trained counsellor

I'm passionate about:

- our **national church** as well as the **parish system**
- increasing our resourcing for **churches supporting adult and child mental health & disabilities** (visible and invisible)
- **General Synod** itself and improving it
- **teamwork** and supporting other Southwark Synod members

My **theology degree and previous experience** means I can engage with Synod debates fluently, and I'm willing and able to speak truth to those in power at any level. My **counselling training** and practice has provided me with invaluable skills in listening, reconciliation, and pastoral care – the nature of debating publicly at Synod means there will always be need for some of these skills. I'm keen to **contribute to debates** where I will have something relevant to say, not speaking for the sake of it.

As a woman with a **young family** I will bring more diversity to General Synod in terms of age and gender. As a **communications** professional with a passion for our diocese and the national church and Synod, I will strive to ensure that Synod's work is communicated clearly and simply, providing updates to deanery and diocesan synods as well as on social media where everyone can access them directly.

What are my priorities?

I want to work within Synod to improve the way it functions and allow a more **diverse range of people** – ages, genders, ethnicities, those with disabilities – to take part in **synodical governance**. The current structures also make it challenging for students, those with young families, and work commitments to put themselves forward. Synod is a legislative body that can be challenging to navigate. I will encourage mentoring, and increased peer support for all new members of Synod, and I'd like to help provide **support for all our new Southwark reps**, so we can all work to the best of our abilities as a team, despite our differences.

This is especially important as we work together to find a 'new normal' for our churches and communities after COVID. The pandemic has reinforced **inequality** across the country; I would like Synod to highlight this and ensure poorer parishes receive more support to enable them to help the vulnerable.

I long for the church to do more to support **adult and child mental health**, a huge challenge for our church and country, post pandemic. There is also a need to better support **ministry to younger people**, including those who have not heard the gospel – only 1% of 18-24 year olds identify as part of our churches so we must do more to fulfil the Great Commission here as well as in helping our young people to develop their values and their confidence.

For us as a family church has sometimes been challenging as a result of our son's autism, so **inclusion** is very important to me. How we encourage and resource our churches to welcome and support those **with visible and invisible disabilities** and **mental health challenges** is something I will encourage Synod to look at.

What do I think about some of the upcoming Synod agenda?

I think the national church should work harder to ensure greater racial justice and equality and I would promote **anti-racism** – an issue that, like eco-church, we have been leading the way on in Southwark. I am committed to the **Living in Love and Faith** process, and to reflecting, listening and appreciating one another despite our differences. I was also proud to vote at Synod for the Church of England becoming carbon-neutral by 2030 and am keen that Synod continue to address the issue of **climate change**.

Archbishop Stephen's vision for a 'simpler, humbler, bolder church with an emphasis on being Christ-like missionary disciples' is exciting, as is the mixed economy church, but our **parish system is the centre of our common life** and should be strengthened and supported so it serves modern needs without losing our valued traditions. I want to show our commitment to **caring for clergy** by taking forward the reform of disciplinary measures not fit for purpose.

Most importantly, I want to support **our work as a diocese**. Our **Southwark** Vision is clear that we want growing churches, prayerful and informed Christians, justice and peace built up, violence challenged, and a church for all which reflects our diverse community in membership and leadership. I want to share with the wider church all the great things happening in Southwark, and to help us learn from other dioceses and the national church.

Feel free to **get in touch** with me, either by phone, email or for a chat over coffee. We all have different interests and passions and I'd love to hear more about yours so I can best represent you.

Many thanks,

Rebecca

Please **re-elect** me as one of your representatives, by putting me as your **first preference**, or as high up as you can.

Do **use your vote** in this election, whatever your views – I think it's vital that we all have a say in our governance.

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